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Postclassic Aztec Figurines and Domestic Ritual

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Postclassic Aztec Figurines and Domestic Ritual

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Dedication

Esto esta dedicado en especial para mi familia.

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Abstract

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The study of ritual and practice within the Aztecs is problematic because of the emphasis given to the state public ceremonies rather than daily practice. Scholars often generalize or set fixed definitions on domestic ritual centered on class, gender, and space. These generalizations are passed on to the objects associated with domestic ritual, the figurines. In my study, I pose that by eliminating such limited terms and definitions about Aztec figurines and domestic ritual might help us gain a better understanding of Aztec daily practice. I argue that by examining figurines one can see the diversity and complexity inherent within domestic ritual that encompassed not only women, but also a variety of participants, social classes, and spaces.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Historically, the study of ritual and religion in Mesoamerica has often revolved around large pyramids, architecture, monumental sculpture and its imagery, and archaeological contexts within sacred site centers. Aztec religion, in particular, has been discussed to a great extent in terms of its relationship to state expansion, ritual human sacrifice, and the sanctification of warfare (Berdan 1982; Hassig 1988; Carrasco 1999). "Aztec" is a modern term referring to the collective group of people residing in the Valley of Central Mexico who traced their origins to the mythical land of Aztlan (Pasztory 1983, 49; Smith 2003, 4). Since the origin of the Aztecs has been treated exhaustively in previous studies, I will not discuss it.[1]

In addition, Aztec religion is often presented as a generalized homogenous system practiced throughout the vast Aztec empire, a domain that included 38 provinces and 489 subjugated towns extending from the Gulf coast of Veracruz, all the way down into Oaxaca and the Pacific slope as far as Guatemala (Hodge 1984). To accept such a notion, one has to ignore that the Aztec territory included numerous diverse city-states with their own *tlatoani* (ruler), *calpolli* (barrio) system, and cultural and social practices. However, even more critical to this discussion is the importance given to the state-level religious practices, which misleadingly overshadows the importance of other rituals and traditions that may have existed outside Tenochtitlan—the Aztec heartland—and more importantly, at the household level.

[1] For further discussion on the origins of the Aztecs see Vaillant 1941; Berdan 1982; Pasztory 1983; Clendinnen 1991; Carrasco 1999; Smith 2003.

Until recently, the ideology employed by many scholars is that the rituals practiced within the public domain—the dominant tradition—trickled down to the household level where they were replicated (Nicholson 1971; Brundage 1985). This Great Tradition/Little Tradition model used to explain Aztec religion developed from Robert Redfield's (1956) model, which argues that the Great Tradition at the state level influences what occurs in the Little Tradition, presumably observed by peasant societies. Based on this model, the majority of state sponsored rituals were public and systematically organized, while domestic rituals were private (in the household), observed individually, less structured and, therefore, less important. This model, however, is problematic for the understanding of Aztec religion because it negates the fluidity and exchange within ritual practice.

Current studies on domestic ritual demonstrate that the context and meanings associated with the household spheres are significant for obtaining a better understanding of ritual practice beyond the state. A recent study on imperialism and the Aztec state proposes that while themes of sacrifice, death, and warfare were inherent in the Aztec capital, these were not necessarily adhered to in peripheral cities or at the household level (Brumfiel 1996). According to Brumfiel, the discovery of female figurines demonstrates that Aztec communities outside Tenochtitlan were more concerned with agriculture, fertility, and themes centered on domestic ritual. Michael Smith among others has also introduced alternative viewpoints to the study of ritual by examining households and domestic settings (Elson and Smith 2001; Smith 2002). What Smith contends is that the continuous appearance of figurines within domestic settings reveals that ritual within the

household and involving figurines, was a "distinctive domestic religion only distantly related to the public religion of Tenochtitlan" (2002, 102). Smith goes on to add:

> For the bulk of the [Aztec] population, the rituals and beliefs of the little tradition, guarded within the home and the patio, were probably of greater import in their daily lives than the distant state-sponsored ceremonies (Ibid., 114).

In both these cases, excavations within residences or domestic settings showed the recurrence of figurines.

Ceramic figurines are among one of the most common artifacts recovered from both elite and commoner household debris and architectural fill. In some instances, the context for some figurines has been described as "ritual dumps" (Elson and Smith 2001, 161; Smith 2002, 110),[2] despite the fact that it is very difficult to differentiate in the archaeological record between ritualized deposition of materials and more mundane deposition. Only in one case known to me, figurines were uncovered among other artifacts in an offering deposited at the foot of a ceremonial temple to Ehécatl in Tlatelolco (Guilliem Arroyo 1997, 1999). Because the majority of figurines are recovered from middens, most scholars have proposed that figurines were discarded during the New Year Fire Ceremonies celebrated every 52 years, as described by Diego Durán and Bernardino de Sahagún (Vaillant 1937, 1938; Elson and Smith 2001; Smith 2002). In fact, most of the available information on figurines derives from Spanish chroniclers whose writing describes the rituals and activities involved with "idols."

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[2] Vaillant uses the terms "ceremonial deposit" and "ceremonial dump" (1937, 316) and in his later work "cyclical dump" (1938, 552).

Figurine Manufacture and Formal Characteristics

Many scholars have already noted the difficulty in studying Aztec figurines given that they are often found in fragments and in very poor condition. However, there is much regional variation and diversity among figurines from each site. While the majority of figurines are in either red or cream colored clay and, to some extent, display similar facial and physical characteristics, there are many that do not fit any mold.

My interest in figurines began when I discovered their occurrence throughout Mesoamerica and their association with domestic ritual. Both of these areas, I would later find out, were understudied. To date, Aztec figurines—totaling not hundreds but thousands—have been uncovered in most Aztec sites spanning across the Valley of Mexico. The numerous collections of figurines are scattered in museums and private collections in Mexico, France, Britain, Switzerland, and all across the United States. Moreover, these figurines are not all homogeneous, as scholars have previously written. On the contrary, Aztec figurines are diverse in size, iconography, costume, and theme.

These ceramic figurines range anywhere from 3 to 20 centimeters in height and are produced from either cream/grey/white or reddish-brown/orange clay, although very rarely, some figurines do emerge in terracotta. The red clay figurines appear better made than their cream/grey counterparts and it has been said that both clay groups have very distinct facial features from each other (Kaplan 1958, 8; Millian 1981, 36). Although the most prevalent figurines are those gendered female, there are also males, animals, architectural structures, cradles, and others. And within the gendered figurines, the categories are numerous: jointed, hollow, rattle, flat-backed, standing, sitting, kneeling,

hunched back, pregnant, deformed and some can be seen holding smaller figurines or other items.

Female figurines are the most prominent, more than males or any other kind. The majority wears elaborate headdresses and/or hairstyles, ear spools, necklaces, and decorative garments. Male figurines are dressed in less decorative garments, although sometimes they are dressed like warriors, and hold a variety of items such as drums, rattle staffs, or weapons. Some female figurines hold small children or small animals in their arms. These children look exactly like the adults and one can easily identify gender by the very visible breasts on the female children. The female figurines carrying animals hold them either on their stomachs or to their chins. Although animal figurines are also seen, they are very limited. The most common animals are possums, dogs, monkeys, bird-like creatures, and some are zoomorphic. The architectural structures shaped like pyramid-temples are stepped platforms leading to either a temple or a figurine standing on top.

Certain characteristics of the figurines reveal great detail such as the rendering of the nose, eyes, shape of the face, hair and some even have visible teeth. Other features are not treated with such care: the large massive feet, the back side of many of the figurines, and for some, the uneven positioning of the breasts that are biologically incorrect. Although the design and detail on the figurines was molded in relief, sometimes the design elements (facial features, headdresses, skirt patterns, necklaces, fingers on hands and feet) were drawn with lines using sharp objects like a maguey spine (Otis Charlton 2001, 28).

Some figurines display visible perforations underneath each arm and/or on their hips. The function of these perforations remains contested. The presence of the perforations points to how figurines could have been hung from these holes on trees, humans, and/or building structures (Millian 1981, 39; Guilliem Arroyo 1997, 114).

Aztec figurines evolved from the Classic Toltec-Mazapan style and these figurines were produced as early as the Pre-Classic period (Kaplan 1958, 1). During the Pre-Classic period, figurines were hand-modeled (1958, 2). The introduction of new technologies, such as the mold in the Classic Period, to the production and manufacture of the figurines witnessed many changes (1958, 2). The introduction of the mold allowed these figurines to be manufactured in the masses, and it led to a standardization of types (1958, 2). However, many characteristics remained the same, among them: the rimmed eyes; the large protruding nose; an open mouth (which later began to include teeth and a visible tongue); and the round hollow earplugs (1958, 169).

Because the figurines derive from many locations—within and outside houses, mounds, rivers, canals, trash debris, and some burials—and in numerous amounts, the accepted theory is that they were mass produced (Cook 1950; Kaplan 1958; Otis Charlton 1994; Smith 2002, 2005). Cook pointed out that given their shared characteristics, she believes all Aztec figurines were likely manufactured in Tlatelolco and then distributed in markets throughout the Valley of Mexico (1950, 99). However, other scholars suggest that the figurine types were not necessarily produced in the same workshops (Otis Charlton 1994; Smith 2005). Michael Smith believes the figurines excavated from the state of Morelos are local styles and not "imitations" of those created in the Valley of

Mexico (2005, 54). Cynthia Otis Charlton, on the other hand, proposes that the demand for these figurines was so high that they were copied and independently produced in local areas, as well as commercially exchanged in others (1994, 210-211). These recent investigations, plus the wide distribution of figurines, make it possible to argue that there were many figurine workshops working simultaneously throughout the Valley of Mexico.

When I started my research, considering the manner in which figurine usage was discussed, it appeared as though scholars had a clear understanding of their function and role. However, as my research continued, the scholarship once believed to be true began to look problematic. Most of the scholarship on figurines was secondary literature and only briefly mentioned the findings in correlation to sculptural, architectural, and ceramic discoveries. When figurines were discussed, they focused on their significance to ceramic chronology, surface dating, contribution to demographic studies, their relationship to Aztec deities, and their association with other archaeological finds and only in recent years, their connection to Aztec religion.

Furthermore, what attracted me to these figurines was what they could reveal about daily ritual and Aztec religion beyond the generic explanations. Eduardo Noguera (1954, 158) first introduced the idea that by studying figurines, scholars could interpret the ancient religion of the people who produced them.

Although several interpretations have been suggested, as of yet, the identity and purpose of Aztec figurines remains contested. Some have suggested figurines are deity effigies (Vaillant 1938; Kaplan 1958; Parsons 1972; Baer 1996; Heyden 1996), others agriculture and/or human amulets to assist in health related concerns or with fertility

(Millian 1981; Barlow and Lehmann 1990; Smith 2002; Klein and Victoria Lona 2009), and in some cases, given that some are rattles, ritual objects for rain making ceremonies (Cook 1950, 99). However, scholars do agree that figurines are ritual objects because they are often found with incense burners, ceramics, and other articles considered sacred. That figurines were part of domestic rituals observed within the household has already been proposed. However, we still do not have a clear understanding of their role within ritual. Were they part of a fertility cult or are they simply a manifestation of the state dominant tradition? Were these rituals only associated with women or were there other agents involved? What do these figurines reveal about household rituals and their participants?

The fact of the matter is that Aztec figurines remain overlooked in the field of Aztec studies. While there are thousands of figurines—both in complete forms and often in fragments—in a variety of sizes and shapes distributed throughout a myriad of Aztec sites, the scholarship on them is limited. The current difficulties with the study of figurines include: the provenance of many of these figurines is unknown; we know very little about their chronology; and perhaps the biggest problem is the lack of a published figurine corpus.

One of the many difficulties with trying to understand Aztec figurines is the manner in which they are classified as miniature representations of Aztec deities. Previous research on Aztec figurines identified them as deities based on the similar traits and insignia that they share with representations of goddesses in the colonial manuscripts/codices (Seler 1996, 70). Others determined the function and symbolism of

figurines based on the descriptions of "idols" by Spanish chroniclers Durán and Sahagún (Cook 1950; Barlow and Lehman 1990; Kaplan 1958). This has ultimately led scholars to associate any single figurine with multiple deities. Figurines often remain grouped under the general headings of fertility deities, and this superficial explanation has become the standard through continuous repetition (Parsons 1972; Millian 1981; Guilliem Arroyo 1997; Otis Charlton 2001).

Statement of the Problem

I focus on figurines from the Late Postclassic period (AD 1455-1519) from Chiconautla[3] and Nonoalco,[4] Mexico, from Dr. George C. Vaillant's collections at the American Museum of Natural History (see Elson and Smith 2001, 161). Both of these sites will prove to be resourceful case studies to my study of domestic ritual outside Tenochtitlan because they were both politically dominated by the Triple Alliance but located outside the Aztec capital. Chiconautla, a provincial center that was part of the Acolhua territory under Texcoco, was an important trading point due to its strategic location between Lake Texcoco and the Teotihuacan Valley. The Triple Alliance refers to the Aztec empire that consisted of three major cities being in control of the Valley of Mexico: Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan,[5] with Tenochtitlan as the dominant power and Texcoco as the second most important power (Pasztory 1983, 52). Each city-state

[3] Also referred as Chicuhnautla, Chicuhnauhtlan (Alva Ixtlixóchitl 1975/77), Chiconauhtla (Gibson 1964, 340-342), and Chiconautlan (Blanton and Hodge 1996, 243).
[4] Also labeled Nonohualco (Seler 1990).
[5] Although it is important to note that Gibson (1964, 18) refers to Tlacopan as Tacuba.

was inhabited by its own ethnic group: Tenochtitlan by the Mexica, Texcoco by the Acolhua, and Tlacopan by the Tepaneca (Gibson 1964, 16-20). The figurines collected from Chiconautla derive from an elite palace. Nonoalco was a site located on the lakeshore between Tlatelolco and Tlacopan and west of Tenochtitlan. Vaillant and others claim that the artifacts from Nonoalco and Chiconautla derived from ritual dumps (Vaillant 1938; Elson 1999).

My objective is to analyze critically how figurines from these two sites functioned in order to obtain a better understanding of ritual practice at the elite domestic level. While it would be interesting to test for figurines and their context within commoner households, most of the collected information derives from elite residences. Although I am forced to study a biased sample due to the limited excavated material, nevertheless, I believe this study can still shed insight into domestic ritual at sites on the margins of the Aztec capital. From this analysis I intend to investigate whether outside of Tenochtitlan elites were more concerned with agriculture and fertility or whether these figurines were representations of state-level religion. I will also consider to what extent representations associated with state ideology permeated regions beyond Tenochtitlan. My hypothesis is that figurines were part of daily practice and that their definition and function varied regionally according to time and to each group. In my study, I hope to explore these ideas in order to shed some light and possibly spark future studies on these archaeological ambiguities.

In discussing domestic ritual, I will use Smith's (2002, 96) definition as those activities occurring within and around households that focused on "curing, fertility,

orderliness, divination, supplication, and other themes that concerned the individual and the family." However, I would add that domestic ritual also includes women, men and children and it was a daily activity practiced by all levels of society.

Methodology

For the purpose of this paper, I decided to use 77 total figurines: 30 from Chiconautla and 47 from Nonoalco. Initially, my goal was to examine the extensive figurine collection (totaling 1,577 figurines) from Vaillant's excavations at these two sites: 544 from Chiconautla and 540 at Nonoalco.[6] However I will only be analyzing 77 figurines because of the limitations imposed by the focus of this thesis and the thorough iconographic analysis I intend to complete on each group (not on each figurine). The basis for this study led me to use a total of 77 specimens from both sites, both complete forms and body fragments.[7]

It is important to note that it became problematic to work with the entire 1,577 figurine collection because some of the figurines are very fragmented to the point of being unrecognizable and therefore, it was very difficult to identify features, iconography, or characteristics that indicated gender. Also, because I was only focusing on the Late Postclassic period, I discarded the figurines dating to the Toltec-Mazapan period. Out of the 77 figurines I analyzed, only some were in complete form and others were broken, in pieces, and/or only the figurine heads.

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[6] These totals are derived from Kaplan (1958, 4-5).

[7] By fragments, I am referring to those figurines that are not complete but are broken and what remains is either the head or the body.

I chose to use Mary Parsons' (1972) typology because it seemed like the most straightforward and concise way in which to organize my corpus. Parsons' classification is based on the type of make up of the figurines, which she calls "functional attributes" (1972: 82). Using Parsons' typology, I categorized the figurines within the groups of Hollow Rattle Figures (Type I), Jointed Figures (Type II), and Solid Figures (Type III). Hollow rattle figures were made from a two-piece mold, creating a hollow body that contained one or two small balls inside (1972, 82). Jointed figures have a flat body with small holes on each corner of the body so that limbs could be attached to them (possibly with twine). From the three types, this type of figurine cannot stand on its own. Solid figures were made by pressing clay into a mold and sometimes fingerprints are visible on the back side. This group contained the most figurines from both sites and showed the most variety in sizes, postures, and themes. Additionally, solid figurines have flat, round, or hunched backs.

Within Parsons' typology, I then divided them into subtype groups based on gender and function, such as females, males, architectural structures, and animals. The female and male figurine groups are organized according to trait/iconographic similarities such as costume, headdresses, and posture. The first section of my analysis will reassess the previous and current theories proposed on the functions and identifications of figurines in an effort to provide a different approach to viewing them. However, I will focus more in depth on the representations of women because those are the most abundant and debated. In addition, I will complete an iconographical analysis of the

figurines' headdresses, costumes, and regalia. In doing so, I will refer to published figurines from other Aztec sites (see below) to study and identify regional variations.

In short, the interpretations proposed for figurines are often contradictory and lack an in-depth art historical analysis. Often, figurines are categorized as "material culture" rather than sculpture which thereby lessens their value when compared to the large sculptural works. The earliest literature simply clustered figurines into composites of earth deities, thereby setting the framework for other studies to come (Seler 1990, 1996). Assigning definite static function and definition to the hundreds of figurines from different Aztec regions is challenging and inaccurate because of the multiplicity of social factors that surround them. The analysis that I am proposing will combine a careful art historical analysis of the figurines and their traits with a careful consideration of the archaeological context and function.

To address properly the role of ritual, I used ethnohistorical sources, theory on domestic ritual, and the archaeological reports. I examined how Diego Durán, Bernardino de Sahagún, and Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón described domestic ritual and the problems that should be considered when using these sources. I did not view such information as the foundation for my arguments or research, but as material I could compare with the archaeological record.

Review of the Literature

Aztec studies have mentioned the appearance of figurines in some form or another. However, no thorough published corpus exists to date. Kaplan (1958: 4) wrote

"nowhere has a comprehensive treatment of Post-Classic figurines been given" and five decades later her statement is echoed by Klein and Victoria Lona (2009: 329) "to date there is no comprehensive study of Aztec figurines made of clay." The focus of this thesis only permits me to provide a brief summary of the previous figurine studies.

As I previously mentioned, figurine studies rely strongly on ethnohistory and yet these records never mention figurines. Instead, the works of Spanish chroniclers continuously mention the discovery of "idols" and "statues" (Sahagún 1950-1982: Book 7:25). It is dangerous to rely on these accounts because these writings never provide a detailed description of the idols that they mention. When idols are mentioned, the writers are vague and often lump all indigenous items regardless of a detailed description—whether it is sculptures, wood effigies, or cloth figures of possible deities. The fact is that even in the present day we still are uncertain how much information is accurate or safe to use from the ethnographic record. The primary texts for Aztec religion and ritual are scholars who base their theories on the accounts by Dúran, Sahagún, Ruiz de Alarcón, and others (Nicholson 1971; Brundage 1985). These documents need to be evaluated with precaution because besides omitting information, these sources were created after the conquest and destruction of the Aztec empire and are riddled with religious Western biases. Nevertheless, because the ethnographic record is one of the few sources we have to reconstruct ancient rituals and traditions, ethnography becomes an important tool to use in conjunction with the archaeological material.

The earliest figurine studies date to the collected Mesoamerican volumes of Eduard Seler who suggested these Aztec figurines were representations of gods and

goddesses (1990).[8] Seler labels these figurines "idols" and commodities that were distributed throughout the valley of Mexico. Many of the deity identifications we use today can be attributed to Seler who first established the notion of these figurines being representations of deities. Although he does not provide a thorough analysis of the figurines he encountered nor their origins, Seler includes a figurine drawing of each of the deities represented. The figurines from his study derive from the collections at the Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City and his own private collection.

Konrad T. Preuss (1901) also categorized the figurines from the Berlin Museum as deities. Preuss goes on to identify the deities under Seler's identification of gods based on the characteristics of the figurines. Although, Preuss is quick to mention that given their mass findings it makes him uncertain of their actual meaning. Preuss does go on to attribute these figurines to private household rituals involving the bathhouse *tezmacalli* (bathhouse/sweathouses) and healers. He interestingly notes that perhaps these figurines are representations of deities that were brought into the private temples of the people and mentions that they were also found tied onto trees in the fields. He too agrees that these figurines were discarded, as well as with other items, during the New Year fire ceremonies every 52 years.

George C. Vaillant's excavations in the 1930s set a precedent for archeology and history in the Valley of Mexico and for Aztec studies. Starting with Zacataneco, Vaillant

[8] Eduard Seler's original manuscript of the *Collected Works in Mesoamerican Linguistics and Archaeology* was completed in the 1900s and it was not until 1990 that Labyrinthos published all of his work in English. Therefore, I will use the earliest date for the purposes of keeping a chronological order.

led a number of excavations throughout the Valley of Mexico that included Chiconautla and Nonoalco in 1935 and 1936, respectively (Vaillant 1937, 1938). Although Vaillant also identified the figurines he uncovered as deities belonging to the Aztec pantheon, he introduced a new methodology that ultimately shaped Aztec chronology based on ceramic dating. Vaillant introduced four ceramic phases in dating Aztec history: Aztec I (1247-1299), Early Aztec II (1299-1351), Late Aztec II (1351-1403), Early Aztec III (1403-1455), Late Aztec III (1455-1507), and Aztec IV (1507-1519). Additionally, Vaillant introduced the idea that the ceramic styles among the excavated material could reveal information from the ethnic groups in the Valley of Mexico that used these ceramics. Vaillant's extensive body of work at these sites proved extremely useful to me in that I had detailed notes from each of his excavations for reference.

Carmen Cook (1950) organized the figurines found in Nonoalco, one of the two sites that I will be concentrating on that was under the jurisdiction of Tlatelolco in the Post Classic period, based on attributes that she compared to the goddesses of the Aztec pantheon. Based on Eduard Seler's definition of deities, Cook concludes that the figurines are within the categories of fertility deities such as Xochiquetzal, Tonantzin/Cihuacoatl, and Cihuacoatl.

Robert Barlow and Henri Lehman (1990)[9] analyzed the figurine collection from the Museum of Man in Paris that contains figurines from various sites from the Central Valley of Mexico. Barlow does not specify the exact provenance of each specimen but

[9] Although this article was published in 1990 by Jesús Monjarás-Ruiz (see bibliography), his original article in French was printed with Henri Lehmann in 1954-55 (In *Etraits de Tribus*, 4, no. 4, Stuggart). Since I am summarizing the previous figurine studies based on chronology, I believe it is best to use his original publishing date.

his analysis included 102 figurines. Using the physical attributes of the figurines, Barlow organized the figurines according to posture: standing, sitting, carrying a child on left arm, carrying a child on right arm, and without child. Barlow also concludes by stating that he also believes these figurines are representations of certain deities.

Flora Kaplan's (1958) masters' thesis studied 934 figurines from Chiconautla and Nonoalco derived from the excavations of George Vaillant in the 1930s. Kaplan was one of the few scholars that completed an extensive study of Aztec figurines and her work remains relevant to today. While Kaplan's methodology is not useful to my analysis because she classifies figurines according to deities from the Aztec pantheon, her study established a general figurine style change from the Toltec-Mazapan period (1232-1299) to the Aztec periods (1299-1519). Kaplan's study of Dr. Vaillant's figurines served as my starting point of research and provided many useful resources for my study. Kaplan's method of typology is to organize the figurines based on a comparison to deities from the descriptions mentioned in the codices. Although her classification seems straightforward, the fact that she tries to organize every single figurine within the identity of a specific god is rather problematic. Using this methodology limits figurine studies because they become overshadowed by the concepts of the Aztec state religion. Nevertheless, prior to Kaplan's study no other scholar had provided some sort of classification for all the figurines from a site. Instead, figurines labeled as certain deities were individually mentioned. Most important to this study, Kaplan categorizes red and white clay figurines and distinguishes the facial features between the two types of clay. Although other studies completed on Aztec figurines make no mention of this, Kaplan states that the

themes change according to the clay color. Kaplan explains that red clay figurines possess rimmed naturalistic eyes and mouths and a pronounced large nose; while white clay figurines are characterized by their round eyes, rimmed open mouth, and large projecting nose.

Mary H. Parsons (1972) examined 755 figurines in fragmentary forms, mostly of which were only heads, from the Teotihuacan Valley project of the 1950s. Parsons' typology proved to be very useful in my grouping of figurines. Parsons classifies the figurines based on functional attributes, such as: hollow rattles, slab-jointed figurines, and solid standing figurines. Within these three categories she makes another set of subtypes based on the identification of deities. Important to my analysis, she also subdivides the hollow rattle figurines into four categories based on their headdresses: plain, double, or single twisted loops on top of the head. Furthermore, Parsons' typology shaped the way figurines would be organized by later scholars such as Otis Charlton (2001).

Alva Millian (1981) is the only scholar to date who moves beyond classifying the figurines among deity groups. Millian examined numerous figurines originating from Tenochtitlan, Atzapotzalco, Teotihuacan, Cholula, Toluca, and Cempoalla, stored in various museums. However, when examining each figurine or figurine group, she does not identify its origin which would have been useful to me in learning about regional variation elsewhere. Millian's method of analysis is based almost entirely on iconography and ornamentation: objects held, position of arms, costume, and headdresses. While Millian provides the best iconographical analysis from the other scholars mentioned her classification includes only three groups, which are rather broad in scope. Millian's study

examined the general iconography of figurines and was the first to propose figurines could be Aztec women, intermediaries between the people and deities, or fertility deities not represented in the Aztec pantheon. Millian (1981) and Kaplan (1958) were both valuable resources for my study and for building the first database.

One of the most unique figurine studies was by archaeologist Salvador Guilliem Arroyo at the Ehécatl Temple in Tlatelolco. Guilliem Arroyo (1997) found 57 figurines dispersed throughout a ceremonial offering at the base of a temple pyramid. Guilliem Arroyo argues these figurines are portraits of Mexica women and that given their posture—eyes looking upward with some having completely closed eyes and the arms crossed across the chest—points to them being dead. What makes this case special to figurine studies is that these figurines were found in a funerary deposit underneath a public ceremonial space and not in a domestic setting thereby eliciting a new possible meaning and function for figurines.

Contrary to previous scholarly theories, Guilliem Arroyo (1997, 133) proposes that these figurines represent sacrificial victims that later converted into the *Cihuateteo* or *Cihuapipiltin* (spirits of women who died in childbirth). All of the figurines Guilliem Arroyo uncovered included both solids and hollow rattle bodies in orange or gray ceramic clay. The striking characteristic of these figurines is that all of them were painted white, an association that Guilliem Arroyo makes to Sahagún's mention of sacrificial victims being painted this color (1997, 114). Guilliem Arroyo mentions that these figurines are reflections of the Mexica woman in appearance due to similar hairstyles and costumes (1997, 116), and here I would add that the costumes also reflect the regional

variation of figurine production. In this case, these figurines from Tlatelolco are quite unique and distinct to the figurines from other Aztec sites. Most interesting to this discussion, these figurines are strikingly different in every aspect to those of their next-door-neighbor site of Nonoalco. Their eyes are painted on with thick black paint, some have upward eyes and many of them have their arms crossed across their chest, two characteristics unseen in the figurines from Nonoalco. Guilliem Arroyo's study also argues that all the figurines that have slits for eyes—in this case, many of the figurines of my corpus show this characteristic—represent dead women (1997, 121-124). Guilliem Arroyo's study proved beneficial to my study in that the figurines recovered from his site, the same region that Cook (1950) and Vaillant (1937) recovered their figurines, were so visually different to each other that it demonstrates the variation occurring within one city-state.

Cynthia Otis Charlton (2001) follows the same classification introduced by Parsons (1972) in her analysis of 372 hollow rattle figurine fragments from the Otumba Project of 1966 through 1969. Although her study focuses only on hollow rattle figurines. However, Otis Charlton added a thorough explanation of the clay, the variety of molds, and overall production of figurines. Otis Charlton's analysis assisted me in understanding the manufacturing of figurines and provided insightful information on figurine workshop production and their distribution.

Michael Smith's excavations at Yautepec, Morelos and overall research have really paved the way for Aztec studies focusing on figurines and ritual. Smith was one of the first Aztec scholars to write on figurines and domestic ritual and their role on the

Aztec state religion. Smith's (2005) excavation at Yautepec, Morelos yielded a wide selection containing 1,906 fragmented figurines. In an effort to discard the previous methodology of organizing the figurines according to deity groups, Smith organizes the figurines into concepts of groups and types. The groups are based on the regions of where the figurines originated, while the types are meant to be the kinds of images depicted in the figurines (such as gender, clothing, hairstyle).

Other scholarly articles that assisted my research because they examine figurines recovered from other Aztec sites were the samples from Huexotla and Xaltocan (Brumfiel 1996; Brumfiel and Overholtzer 2009). These Aztec sites were useful because they revealed regional variation and distributional patterns, as is the case of Huexotla. The material on Huexotla was a good source for comparison with Chiconautla since they both fell under the same Texcoco region.

Recently, new scholarship on Mesoamerican figurines has provided groundbreaking contributions to these studies (Halperin et al. 2009). These studies provide insightful methodologies and approaches to domestic ritual, figurine function, and women's roles in Mesoamerica. In this one of a kind volume, two articles were important in my figurine studies: Elizabeth Brumfiel and Lisa Overholtzer's (2009) study on figurines from Xaltocan, Mexico and Cecelia Klein and Naoli Victoria Lona's (2009) study of figurines made of copal recently excavated at Tenochtitlan, Mexico. Brumfiel and Overholtzer's (2009) analysis greatly focused on the function and meaning of figurines which they argue, at Xaltocan, served to identify local community identity and assisted the people with their health and fertility related concerns.

The study on copal figurines at Tenochtitlan by Klein and Victoria Lona (2009) was also very important to my discussion because they argued that they could find no resemblance between the figurines and the Aztec deities depicted in the colonial manuscripts. Vital to my thesis, Klein and Victoria Lona argue that the deities present in the Aztec pantheon at the time of the conquest, were imported by the Aztec state from other regions (stretching from nearby states like Oaxaca all the way to Central America) and incorporated in the state pantheon. Klein and Victoria Lona discussed Aztec religion as having been introduced from regions outside of Tenochtitlan and then adopted by the city-state. Klein and Victoria Lona's (2009: 329) research supports my argument when they state that "the fact that the Aztec ceramic figurine corpus is so diverse in style and iconography" could only pin point to how the majority of the ceramic figurines were "unrelated to members of the official Aztec pantheon." Klein and Victoria Lona focused on identifying figurines by utilizing Millian's (1981) groups (and not Parsons' typology), describing their characteristics and then gathering all the information that has been said about those deities. And while Klein and Victoria Lona's methodology of comparing the iconography of the figurines to the descriptions other scholars have said about the deities, provided a great reference point for examining my figurines.

Other sources for Aztec figurine studies derive from museum collections. Barlow and Lehmann (1990) classified figurines from the collection at the Museum of Man in Paris. And the only large collection of figurines to be published is included in a catalogue collection for Mexican ceramics from the Ethnographic Museum of Basel (Baer 1996). While these publications provide great visual images of complete figurines, they lack

provenance, chronology, or any specifics that would assist my research. Nevertheless, the extensive collection of images within this catalogue proved useful to my analysis because I had different images of complete figurines that I could compare to the specimens that I had to work with that were very fragmented.

Additional publications I used for figurine studies from other Mesoamerican sites included: Chalcatzingo (Cyphers 1988) and Oaxaca (Marcus 1998). Although these studies analyze figurines dating to the Formative and Preclassic periods, these studies were beneficial to my study because they focus on domestic ritual, women, and the use of figurines by other Mesoamerican groups.

For the study of domestic ritual, I used a recent collection of literature on domestic ritual in Mesoamerica (Plunket 2002) and studies on women and ritual within the domestic setting (Burkhart 1997). Finally, for the theoretical framework on daily practice I used various studies of daily practice and material culture (Whitehouse 1996; Wilkins 1996; Love 1999).

Conclusions

It is difficult to assign these Aztec figurines to specific deities as previous scholars have done in the past because doing so is very problematic. For one, a comprehensive study has not been done on Aztec deities or sculptures, much less Aztec figurines. Aztec scholarship lacks a thorough study on the iconographic identification of deities. The only available study known to me is by Henry Nicholson (1971) who provides an iconographic study of some gods and goddesses of the Aztec pantheon.

Secondly, many of the theories proposed by past scholars on Aztec deities, religion, and figurines are in need of dire re-evaluation. What these studies demonstrate is that figurines vary stylistically from one region to the next, which reflects the preferences of those particular groups who manufactured them. I will return to these problems and questions later in the thesis.

Chapter Two: Aztec Religion and Ritual

> [To the Aztecs religion] was so great that it is no exaggeration to say that their entire existence revolved around their religion and that there was not a single act, public or private, that was not tinged by religious sentiment (Caso 1958: 90).

Religion and ritual played an essential role in every aspect of Aztec civilization and culture. However, the manner in which these practices influenced Aztec daily life remains obscure. Part of the problem is that most—if not all—of the discourse on the Aztecs, until now, focused on the ritual of sacrifice. It is difficult to believe that such a large society composed of hundreds of city-states and subordinate groups all observed, participated, and most importantly, accepted this practice. Given the limitations of my research, this chapter will not be a comprehensive discussion of Aztec religion and ritual but rather a general introduction into the intricacies associated with domestic ritual. In this chapter, I will review the religious ideology of Aztec culture as proposed within the scholarship. I will first explain a broad overview of what was practiced at the city-state level as opposed to that in the domestic setting and then address current issues that have emerged within the study of religion.

It is important to note that Aztec religion is difficult to understand and explain. There are no clear boundaries: virtually all entities embodied a special animistic energy (i.e. objects, natural resources, etc.), deities shared overlapping characteristics, making them almost impossible to identify (even the best scholars cannot agree on deity

identification) and it is unclear what was practiced by everyday commoners. From a western perspective, Aztec religion appears as a massive indistinct blend of concepts.

There are many reasons why we know so much about state-sponsored sacrificial acts but know very little about daily practice rituals. As I previously mentioned, most of the available information on Aztec religion and ritual derives from ethnohistorical accounts. Sixteenth-century Spanish chroniclers only included what they compiled from their interviews with a small group of elite, male informants. This relatively small group of people ultimately shaped the manner in which Spanish accounts depicted all Aztec society. Day to day rituals performed by women and groups living outside Tenochtitlan or in the peripheries were excluded from these descriptions. What we are left with are the rituals practiced at the state level, in the Aztec center of Tenochtitlan, and by the dominant Mexica group. Furthermore, the dependence on Spanish accounts continues the emphasis on state level male oriented religious studies while disregarding a collection of other groups that were involved.

According to the archaeological record, the emergence of the Aztecs occurs between 1150 and 1350 AD (Smith 2003, 37). However, the Aztec empire was not established until 1428, when they create a military alliance and finally gain political control of the valley of Central Mexico. The Aztecs were composed of nine indigenous groups, the most widely known being the Mexica.[10] The Mexica, often labeled

[10] Smith (2003, 4) mentions that there were "20 or so" ethnic groups including the Tlahuica, a group not mentioned by Hodge (1984, 17). Charles Gibson's (1964, 9) study on "Aztec" ethnic groups describes the same eight groups mentioned by Hodge, but he includes the Otomi, and I will therefore use Hodge's study to avoid confusion.

Tenocha,[11] resided in Tenochtitlan and were the most powerful political group. At the time of the Spanish conquest these nine groups referred to themselves by their ethnic regional names: Acolhua, Tepaneca, Mexica, Chalca, Xochimilca, Culhua, Cuitlahuaca, and Mixquica (Hodge 1984, 17-18). For the purposes of this study, I will mention that the reason why these nine groups are labeled "Aztecs" stems from their shared cultural traditions and mythological story of origin.[12]

Nevertheless, in the literature, these ethnic groups become grouped under the Mexica cultural banner, whereby their traditions and religious practices become one homogenous entity. There is less available historical and cultural information on the other ethnic groups. To avoid any confusion, since this study will focus on the people of Nonoalco and Chiconautla, which fall under the ethnic groups of Mexica and Acolhuaque respectively, I will use the terms Acolhua and Mexica to refer to the particular areas I am discussing and will only use the term Aztec to denote the larger collective groups.

In trying to understand Aztec religion and ritual, a dichotomy emerges between what was practiced at the city-state level and what some scholars believe was actually practiced within the domestic/household sphere. Often the case, there is more information on state religion because more archaeological material is found at large ritual centers whereas domestic settings often yield very little data. More excavations focus on large ritual centers than on domestic compounds. More excitement is generated by large, sculptural or architectural discoveries than by the careful and painstaking documentation

[11] Tenocha refers to Tenoch, the individual who led the Aztecs into the Valley of Mexico.

[12] Smith (2003, 4) argues that these ethnic groups also shared the same Nahuatl language while other scholars state they all spoke different languages (Pasztory 1983, 47).

of archaeological sequences and stratigraphy. Before Elson and Smith's (2001) research on domestic ritual, scholars argued either daily ritual was a watered-down version of the state religion or simply cults. However, as this study will demonstrate, these arguments are not mutually exclusive. Further exploration of domestic ritual shows that daily ritual is not what scholars once categorized as part of cults or a diluted version of state religion. Instead, daily ritual reveals that it can be either one or the other or a blend of both but that ultimately, it is much more complex than it was originally presented.

Recent archaeological studies have explained that ritual language, daily ritual and material culture are more explicable than once thought possible. Ritual can be explained because it is an action that is bound by more rules and constraints than any other human activity (Whitehouse 1996, 9). Love (1999, 130) explains that material culture "is created by structured practice and ideology, but it also transforms them via the daily actions of reflective agents." And although "rituals can be invented and/or re-invented" they will essentially "be given a veneer of timelessness to legitimate them" (Wilkins 1996, 3). Important to this discussion, is the notion that through material culture one can reconstruct the daily practices of past cultures.

The City-State Level Ritual

From sixteenth century accounts by friars such as Diego Durán and Bernardino de Sahagún, we know that the Aztecs celebrated countless festivities throughout the year venerating deities (Durán 1971; Sahagún 1950-81). The majority of these rituals were sponsored by and part of the state religion. These traditions centered on the calendar and

the *veintana* rituals observed throughout the year. Because the Mexicas were the ruling group of the Aztec empire, most of the festivities celebrated at the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan revolved around their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli (Smith 2003, 220-224). Although the Mexicas placed a Huitzilopochtli effigy in the temples of those groups they defeated, they allowed these subordinate groups to continue practicing their cultural beliefs (Gibson 1964, 23). Therefore, various religious groups coexisted under one political group.

Human sacrifice was a vital rite to the Mexica religious celebrations at the state level. As I mentioned previously, the Aztecs are infamous for their incessant practice of human sacrifice, which they took to a completely different level than any other Mesoamerican group. This rite was the foundation of Aztec religion at the city-state level because it facilitated the power of the state, justified state expansion, maintained the economy and trade, and provided a mythological religious context for the people (Hassig 1988, 263-265).

Aztec religious ideology mandated the sacrifice of humans as a means to fulfill both the supernatural and human worlds. Sacrifice was part of a larger pan Mesoamerican tradition that was a reciprocal exchange between the individual and the gods. The origins of sacrifice seem to stem from an early Mesoamerican tradition. In exchange for the most precious gift of life and blood, the gods would provide agricultural fertility and prosperity to the people. This ideology was founded on the belief that the gods were continuously thirsty for human blood. In order to placate their possible retaliations on humans, by

causing draught or famine, the people would be forever in debt to the gods by sacrificing humans.

Human sacrifice was an integral part of all mythological stories that justified this practice. The Mexica's patron deity Huitzilopochtli myth revolves around the sacrifice of his mother, brothers, and sister in order for his birth to occur. Therefore, human sacrifice played an important role within every aspect of Aztec life that linked life and death and the cosmos (Smith 203, 215-218)

Ritual acts at the Templo Mayor precinct helped legitimize many political events including the installation of rulers, grand scale festivals that included human sacrifice, exchange of tribute and gifts, and the meeting of rulers (Smith 2003, 221-222). In addition, sacrifice was part of the state level rituals that were public events, enacted before large audiences and with enough pomp for all to see. This public ritual involved captives being dressed as certain deities, called *ixiptlas* that were sacrificed (Smith 217). And while these sacrifices were public for all to see, commoners and other visiting nobles did not have access to the visual iconography associated with warfare. This argument is rather contradictory since Brumfiel (1998, 7) argues that commoners and visiting nobles would not be close enough to see the warfare iconography on the temples. However, this does not seem likely since the purpose of the large state sculptural works was to intimidate and visually demonstrate the power of the state. In this case, it would be in the favor of the Mexica state to allow others to see their intimidating imagery. Human sacrifice also reinforced class stratification in that it distinguished the elite and the warriors from the commoners, the sacrificial victims (Brumfiel 1998, 10-11).

Nevertheless, while sacrifice played an important role within city-state religious practices, the manifold festivities celebrated almost every month correlating to the seasons demonstrates that the state acknowledged the importance of agriculture. Whether the state incorporated many festivals within the main state rituals as a way to gain widespread support or viewed the vital role agriculture played within the majority of the city remains to be explored. Critical to this discussion is that Aztec figurine studies often omit the many large-scale spectacles and performances sponsored by rulers and elites that focused on the seasons and agriculture.

Michael Smith presented the dichotomy between state and folk communities and public versus private ritual by defining these terms within the Great Tradition/Little Tradition model. Smith collected previous scholarship on Aztec religion and categorized it within the definitions of this model (Smith 2002, 95). Introduced by Robert Redfield (1956), the Great Tradition/Little Tradition model defines public rituals as those sponsored by the state, whereas private rituals were those performed by individuals within the home. Ultimately, what this model proposes is that the Great Tradition, the state rituals and ceremonies, influence the Little Tradition, the folk communities, which then replicate what occurs at the state.

According to Smith and others, the dominant Aztec tradition suggests that the rituals and performances practiced were part of the public domain and that these observances trickled down to the household level, where they were replicated (2002, 94). Smith proposes four categories of rituals based on his dichotomy of "public/private" and "state/popular" classifications. Smith defines them as the following:

1—Public state rituals: complex and long affairs that were celebrated by many social groups that included themes of agricultural fertility, cosmic warfare, and the reciprocal relationship to their gods (sacrifice).
2—Private state rituals: rituals performed by rulers and priests on a more private individual basis.
3—Public popular rituals: public ceremonies that celebrated or focused on fertility and rebirth.
4—Private popular rituals: rituals carried out in the household and outside the city-state that stressed fertility, curing, divination, family themes, and other domestic rituals (Smith 2002: 95-96).

Based on Robert Redfield's "Great/Little traditions," Smith concludes that the majority of state sponsored rituals were public and systematically organized, while domestic rituals were private (in the household) and less structured (2002: 96). Nonetheless, there are many problems following the Great/Little Tradition model.

From the rituals of other Mesoamerican civilizations, we know that many "public" rituals occurring in pyramid temples were restricted to an elite few while some household rituals were probably not all private (McAnany 2002, 118). Part of the problem consists in that the "domestic" is automatically associated with the home, as a private act, and most of the time, as only a woman's space. For example, Louise Burkhart (1997) focuses on Mexica women's rituals in association with domestic ritual. Burkhart argues that the domestic was clearly linked with the home, which was constructed as a female space, and that the activities carried out within the household—sweeping, making of offerings, cooking, and textile production—were of religious importance (1997: 28). While I agree with Burkhart that the acts performed by women within the house were as crucial as those performed by priests in the temples, I also dissent with her definitions.

Though figurines in other areas, such as Chalcatzingo, have been associated with household domestic ritual (Cyphers 1993; Marcus 1998), I believe that given their vast distribution throughout the Valley of Mexico, they were part of domestic rituals not confined only to households. In other Mesoamerican sites, domestic ritual was not limited only to the privacy of the house (Spence 2002), nor was it practiced solely by women or by an individual (Winter 2002). What these cases demonstrate is that domestic ritual cannot be explained or defined as only within the boundaries of female/private/household space or male/public/plazas space. On the contrary, domestic ritual and ritual in general are fluid.

What some scholars have proposed is that the rituals enacted at the state level were not occurring outside of Tenochtitlan. Elizabeth Brumfiel's (1996) study on imperialism and the Aztec state proposes that while themes of sacrifice, death, and warfare were inherent in the Aztec capital, these were not necessarily adhered to in peripheral cities.[13] According to Brumfiel, the communities living outside the Aztec heartland were more concerned with agriculture and fertility (1996, 149). Using figurines as evidence, Brumfiel argues that peripheral non-elite communities like Xaltocan and Xico, were centered on domestic ritual. But how can we differentiate state rituals from domestic rituals? In this case, we still do not have a clear understanding of what constituted domestic ritual.

[13] The theme of resistance by peripheral city-states against Aztec hegemony is a topic briefly mentioned by some scholars. Although Brumfiel and Smith (2002) slightly cover this issue, there is no scholar, to my knowledge, that has fully explored this theme within Aztec Studies.

The Domestic Level Ritual

As it currently stands, save for Burkhart (1997) and Smith (2002) and little is known about domestic ritual for various reasons. Although scholars allude to other practices being performed in the home and in other city-states, no study has fully explored these practices. First, the ethnographic record does not include much information on this area because they either focused on the state religion and/or the information gathered was from a small group of individuals who were all male and elites (Brown 1983, 133; Burkhart 1997, 27)

Secondly, domestic ritual within Aztec scholarship is difficult because of the inconsistent manner in which it is defined. Domestic ritual is defined as that which is private, within the confines of the household, and performed by all female agents regardless of social class because of the gender roles imposed by Aztec society (Nicholson 1971, 436; Smith 2003, 233-234)**.** Others classify it as that which is part of the "folk tradition" that focuses on curing, magic, and fertility and whose usual agents are commoners and non-elite (Pazstory 1983, 282-284; Brundage 1985, 178-179). As a matter of fact, religion at the domestic level is often dismissed and considered inferior to the formal state religion when labeled a "cult" of fertility or agriculture.

According to the ethnographic record, the elite domestic rituals were those rituals that imitated what the state sponsored. Similar to the manner in which deities were worshipped at the temples in Tenochtitlan, friars writing in the end of the sixteenth-century describe how they found small idols within the home that served this same

purpose. Often these chroniclers associate these small figurines to have the same purpose and meaning as figurines of Christian saints.

An interesting point about ritual practice described by Aztec scholars among the general population is that this group of people was not really part of the larger state religion. Often this social group of people partook in the rituals sponsored by the state but often out of fear (an overshadow of the gods) and routine (Brundage 1985, 8). Scholars often describe this kind of religious practice as magic and viewed not as a deep religious affair in comparison to that adhered by the priests or nobility of the state.

In addition, domestic ritual is often defined as within the home and by female agents. Susan Kellog (1988) and Louise Burkhart (1997) argue that women had complete authority over the household. Sweeping, cleaning, and placing offerings to the household altars for their deity effigies were all part of domestic ritual. According to Burkhart, these practices were as important as those being performed by priests at the temples of the ceremonial precinct in Tenochtitlan because they were essential services to their deities (1997, 33-35).

In terms of domestic ritual, figurines and other small effigies are the most commonly attributed items to household ritual. Although there is no exact mention of figurines, chroniclers and historians often used the term "idols" when describing the many small figurines found in houses, streets, fountains, hills, roads, temples and houses (Clavigero 1945, 88). These idols were often associated with altars within the home to certain deities although no one idol is ever attributed (Clavigero 1945, 89). One

commonality among scholars is that they mention that these idols are always found in great numbers around constructed altars.

Other sites reveal the interplay, negotiation and interrelationship between genders and household organization and activities (Evans 2001, 258-264; Inomata et al. 2002). Among the Maya, elite palaces showed that while elite leaders were concerned with sponsoring community events, they also hosted small exclusive events where very few selective members were allowed to participate (Inomata 2006, 211). A study on domestic activities in Aguateca, Guatemala domestic structures showed that the private and public spheres merged (Inomata et al. 2002, 327). This excavation of elite residences showed that multiple activities were being carried out and that these elite palaces and residences served both private and public events.

Other forms of domestic ritual include rituals centered on sweatbaths. Evans' excavation at a Cihuatecpan village revealed figurines were primarily found in and around sweat baths and therefore argues their significance revolved around domestic ritual and women (2001, 258-259). Sweat baths were associated with healing, relieving labor pain, and assisting in childbirth (2001, 259). However, as Evans points out, men also participated in sweathbath rituals for curing and illness (2001, 258-259). Therefore, this domestic ritual practice would have involved both female and male agents.

Conclusions

In past Aztec studies, religion practiced in the peripheries or in rural communities is either assumed to be a reflection of the state sponsored practices or labeled as a female

fertility cult. However, one must accept there was ritual diversity among the Aztecs, both regionally and socially, and therefore, these two interpretations, which emphasize a false dichotomy between public and private, are not mutually exclusive. Rather, these interpretations demand a reevaluation in order to acknowledge ritual diversity.

Daily ritual would have included a diversity of places in which the ritual acts would have been carried out. These locations include open plazas, inside and outside residential complexes, on top of pyramid structures, inside temples, inside sweatbaths, around canals and rivers, and agricultural fields among others. Ritual activity would also involve a wide array of actors that were not all necessarily one gender, but rather, engaged men, women, children, different social classes, communities, and perhaps, ethnic groups. She writes, Furthermore, the ritual engaged by the individual or the collective group or community would have also had different meaning to the different actors participating in such a ritual event.

What we must keep in mind is that ritual at both the state level and the domestic level must have had some similar conventions and routines that were part of a larger Mesoamerican tradition. Catherine Bell writes:

> Ritualization [is] a creative act of production, a strategic reproduction of the past in such a way as to maximize its domination of the present…Tradition exists because it is constantly produced and reproduced, pruned for a clear profile, and softened to absorb revitalizing elements (1992, 123).

While the rituals may have been flexible to accommodate the needs of those who practiced them at both the state and domestic level, it also may have contained fixed activities that reflected a continuity of the past. Perhaps domestic ritual was different from state rituals, but the underlying core—the focus on agriculture, fertility, renewal, and assistance from the gods—remained the same. Rulers, elites, commoners and in general all communities worried about agricultural fertility and growth because their subsistence depended on it. The reality is that while the state used rituals for propagandistic purposes, as individuals all these people would have shared the same anxieties: agricultural prosperity and health concerns. What this demonstrates is that domestic ritual does not have such clear-cut definitions but that it varied by individual, location, and possibly ethnic groups.

Chapter Three: The Figurine Corpus of Chiconautla and Nonoalco

In this case of study, all the figurines from my corpus were recovered from trench excavations completed at two different locations. These locations included the ruins of an unoccupied structure at one site and a canal located by residences at the other. The materials recovered from these sites were part of cyclical ritual dumps (Vaillant 1937, 1938; Elson and Smith 2001). These sites were selected to provide a basis for ritual comparison for various reasons. Geographically, both of these locations are outside of Tenochtitlan, and they differ in distance from the Aztec capital. Politically, both sites had varying political and social relationships to the Aztec homeland, even though both were under its political control. Lastly, the figurines excavated from theses two sites were recovered from very different settings: a residential structure and a canal. The figurine samples from each of these sites can be compared in order to understand domestic ritual outside of Tenochtitlan and the ritual variance they reveal.

Given that the recent publications were not accessible to Vaillant (1937, 1938) and Kaplan (1958) at the time of their research, I will also include a brief historical background on these sites to demonstrate their social diversity and to provide a historical context.

Chiconautla: Acolhua City Center

Chiconautla is situated on the northeastern corner of Lake Texcoco, along an important trade route that connected Tenochtitlan to the Gulf Coast and ultimately,

provided an economic advantage to this city-state (Elson 1999, 153; Blanton 1996, 78). It was a city that was part of the Acolhua domain that was under the political control of Texcoco[14] (Gibson 1964, 40; Elson 1999, 151-153; Smith 2008, 45). At the time of the Spanish conquest, Chiconautla was a prominent *altepetl* (polity), both politically and economically.

The first signs of occupation at Chiconautla date to the early Postclassic Period (A.D. 950-1150). By the Middle Postclassic Period (A.D. 1150-1350), Chiconautla was one of several large villages that emerged as a polity[15] in the Basin of Mexico (Elson 1999, 153-154). After the establishment of the Triple Alliance in 1428 and their absorption of semi-autonomous polities throughout the Valley of Mexico, ethnohistoric sources state that Chiconautla's ruling elite maintained their political power in this area through blood ties and marriage to the Texcocan rulers (Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975/77, 89-90; Elson 1999, 153).

Chiconautla would also have profited from its political and social ties to Tenochtitlan. In the Codex Mendoza, a depiction of a *tlatoani* (lord) of Chiconautla in Motecuhzoma's palace lists this city as one of the "friends and confederates of Motecuhzoma" (Ross 1984: 110-111). It has been suggested that Chiconautla may have had political and family ties to Tenochtitlan through intermarriage (Elson 1999, 53).

[14] Texcoco is referred to as the most culturally and politically successful city from the Triple Alliance. It was known for its artistic splendor that surpassed Tenochtitlan (Gibson 1964, 18; Pasztory 1983: 212).
[15] The historical sources mention that when the first groups of Chichimecs began settling around the Valley of Mexico, the Acolhua, a people originating from provinces of Michoacan, brought the Otomies and established political leaders in various cities including this region (Alva Ixtlixochitl 1975/77).

Therefore, Chiconautla would have benefited from its political and social relations to Tenochtitlan. So, in order for this polity to maintain its political standing, one could argue it was in the best interest for Chiconautla to practice the same ideology as the Mexica of the Aztec heartland. However, examining the number of figurines from this location and where they were excavated from proves the contrary.

Scholars agree that this excavation site was once a tlatoani's *tecpan*, an elite palace (Vaillant 548; Elson 1999, 151; Elson and Smith 2001, 161-163; Evans 2008, 32-33). This structure shares similarities common to other elite residences: it was built on platforms, it contained rooms around an enclosed patio, it had stone fireplaces and sweatbaths, the floors were plastered, and it had mud-covered granaries. The palace witnessed three construction phases (Elson 1999: 155-159): the first phase in the Early Postclassic Period (A.D. 950-1150), the second phase showing more growth in the palace in the Early Aztec or Middle Postclassic Period (A.D. 1150-1350), and the final construction ending in the Late Aztec Period (A.D. 1350-1520).

The majority of the figurines recovered from this location derived from residential complexes but primarily the North House and South House, and dated to the Early Aztec Period (see Elson and Smith 2001, 163). In the Late Aztec Period, the South House was destroyed, filled with debris, and covered with a large platform. The South House underneath the South Platform yielded the figurines and other materials that Vaillant (1937) labeled a "ceremonial dump"[16] (Elson 1999: 159-162). In addition to figurines, the residences contained incense burners, obsidian blades, large ceramic shreds, spindle

[16] See footnote 2.

whorls, *tlacuillis* (hearth ovens), and in the North House, a *temascalli* (sweatbath) was found. These are domestic indicators because these areas and objects were associated with activities performed and inhabited by women.

According to Vaillant (1937, 1938), the items found in the South House appeared to be a cyclical dump from the New Fire Ceremony that occurred every 52 years. The Aztecs believed that every 52 years a new calendrical cycle began and the New Fire Ceremony celebrated the start of this new cycle (Elson and Smith 2001, 157-159). During this celebration, the fires in all the households and temples would be turned off for five days awaiting the start of the new year and, in essence, the renewal of the world. As soon as the new fire had been lit welcoming the new year, the people would rid themselves of all their old ceramic cookware, utensils, and other household items, including their "idols," in order to rid themselves of the old and start with the new (Elson and Smith 2001, 159). Sahagún describes this ritual as:

> First they put out fires everywhere in the country around. And the statues, hewn in either wood or stone, kept in each man's home and regarded as gods, were all cast into the water…Rubbish was thrown out; none lay in any of the houses (1950-1982: Book 7: 25).

Elson and Smith suggest that the Aztecs discarded old household objects because "as potential receptacles of 'essences,' [the items] no longer held desirable properties" (2001, 15). The fact that the figurines from Chiconautla were part of a midden that included other ceramic shreds, incense burners, and other household items could be evidence that in fact this was a deposit of the New Fire Ceremony as proposed by Vaillant.

Elson (1999, 161) argues that the wide distribution of figurines and spindle whorls recovered from the residential complexes demonstrates that figurines were part of household ritual because these houses were female spaces where domestic related activities such as cloth production, spinning, childbearing, and child rearing occurred. Residential areas were places where noble women—wives and concubines of the tlatoani—worked together to weave, produce textiles and clothes, and other economic productions that aided the economic status of the court (Evans 2001).

Contrary to Elson's (1999) argument, I would note that elite palaces have been known to host not only political events but also religious and domestic activities (Inomata 2006). It's plausible that multiple events both private and public, and involving multiple participants would have occurred at such palace. As Inomata suggests, elites were often burdened with administrative tasks that involved both public spectacles and exclusive ceremonial events that often occurred within their palaces and residences (Inomata 2006, 210-211). Additionally, Elson's argument does not support the figurines derived from Chiconautla that are gendered male (many of these are dressed like soldiers), or are shaped like pyramid structures, and animals. It is easy to associate female figurines to domestic ritual because they are linked to female fertility deities. However, the rest of the figurines are more difficult to connect to women's concerns, especially the pyramid structures, which are often left out of discussions involving domestic ritual.

Formal Characteristics of Chiconautla Figurines

In general, Chiconautla had an abundance of female figurines in comparison to the other categories. Within the female category, those classified as rattles were by far the most widely seen. An oddity only seen in the Chiconautla sample was that I did not have any architectural structures or animal shaped figures. I could not identify any animal figures and the five architectural structures I found dated to the Toltec-Mazapan period (Kaplan 1958, 35). I initially started with 57 figurines from this site and I discarded the 5 architectural structure figurines, as well as, another 22 figurines that were difficult to identify. In total, I worked with 30 figurines from this site. The figurines ranged in size from 3 to 13 inches in height.

Type I Hollow Rattle Figures

Compared to Nonoalco, Chiconautla had a vast number of rattles that totaled eighteen figurines. All of the rattles I identified were gendered female with the exception one male figure. Although rare, male hollow rattles are seen in Guilliem Arroyo's (1997) figurines from Tlatelolco[17] and in Parsons (1972) at Teotihuacan.[18] All of the female rattles were rendered in red clay, and only the male figure was in cream-colored clay with white remnants. Of the 18 rattles only 2 figures were complete, 6 were body fragments, and 10 were heads. Many of the rattles had round backs making them easy to hold in a

[17] Guilliem Arroyo classifies the male figurine as a representation of the deity Quetzalcoatl, the god of wind. A rarity at his site was finding rattles in the shape of animals, specifically possums carrying offspring on their backs, and other zoomorphic figures (1997, 124-125)

[18] Parsons labels the two groups of male rattles she found at her site as Type I-B and Type I-C and identified them as the male gods Macuilxochitl, the god of song, and Huehueteol, the old god of fire, respectively (1972, 86-87).

hand, and most of the body fragments and the complete figurines could stand on their own.

Subtype A Female

Only one female gendered figurine was complete (although the female figure was badly cracked in the abdomen area), and it differed from the others in that it was in a kneeling position (Figure A1). All of the female figurines have in common the slit eyes, two-horned shaped headdress, large protruding noses, ear spools and parted lips. In some, the ear spools are indicated with holes whereas in others, the ear spools were rendered in relief. The postures vary: three of them had arms across the chest, on had arms on the hips, another had arms on its knees, and two were holding smaller figures in front of their chest (Figure A2). Parsons (1972, 85) identified some figurines in this category at her site to be pregnant, which I did not find in any of the rattle figures I analyzed at both sites.

Parsons points out that the faces of her figurine collection from this type are oval in comparison to the solid figurines in Type III, which are more angular (1972, 82-83). Although I found this to be true with my corpus, I would add that the shape of the faces showed stylistic differences, with some being more round than oval, elongated oval, and varying oval shapes. Also important to note here is that the two-horned headdress varies in style. Some have the thin (Figure A3) or thick horns pointing straight up and others have thin horns that face to each side of the head. Berdan and Anawalt (1997, 146) argue that this two-horn style was a hairstyle typical of a married Aztec woman: the two horns of hair sat at the top of the head while the rest of the folded hair remained on the neck.

Yet, Berdan and Anawalt also see this hairstyle worn by the *cihuapipiltin*, the women who died at childbirth and became goddesses (1997, 146).

Rattle figurines are the type most frequently found throughout the Valley of Mexico and are the most discussed because scholars link these to Cihuacoatl/Coatlicue/Xochiquetzal earth deities who were related to fertility. Kaplan classifies this group as Type I Coatlicue because of the crisscross geometric pattern skirt worn by this group, which she argues is a representation of the intertwining of serpents (Kaplan 1958, 15-17). Coatlicue also literally translates to "she of the serpent skirt" (1958, 16). Only one female rattle wore what appeared to be the crisscross geometric pattern skirt, because the rest of the body fragments wore a plain garment devoid of decoration. Cook (1950, 96-97) believes this type to be Cihuacoatl, while Barlow and Lehmann (1990, 263-269) see the two plain projections in the headdress as a characteristic of the goddess Xochiquetzal. Agreeing with Cook and Seler, Parsons labels this category as a "Coatlicue-Cihuacoatl earth goddess composite" (1972, 85).

Guilliem Arroyo on the other hand, proposes that the female rattle figurines with their slanted eyes and arms across their chest are dead Aztec women (1997, 123-124). The female rattles at Guilliem Arroyo's site looked particularly similar to some of the rattle figurines from both Chiconautla and Nonoalco with the exception of: their eyes are more slanted and closer together, the ear spools are complete holes, and one of them appears visibly pregnant.

Subtype B Male

Although it did not contain a small ball, I classified one male figure as a rattle because it has a hollow body (Figure A4). The male rattle stands with an arm to the side holding what appears to be a weapon. This figure is dressed in a feather-like garment and a loincloth. The costume looks like a simple Aztec warrior costume. The facial features on this figurine are not very distinguishable except for the protruding jaw and tongue.

Type II Jointed Figures

This type does not seem to be a popular type because only one jointed figure was identified at each site. Jointed figurines are often missing the head and limbs, which makes it difficult to assign gender to these figures. Parsons (1972, 88) points out that the limbs are rarely found. The jointed bodies are usually rectangular and flat with no decoration on the garments. They do, however, wear a necklace that was either molded or incised (1972, 88). Also, I did not see any figurines in cream clay because they are consistently rendered in red clay.

Only one figurine was jointed and was made up of only a flat body (Figure A5). It was made in red clay but with visible black firing. The head and other limbs are missing but one can notice the outline of arms that were once crossed across the chest and are now erased. It was gendered female because of the visible breasts. Parsons (1972, 88) believes the breasts and the fact that the jointed figurines at her site carry children make this figurine a representation of the goddess Xochiquetzal. However, it would be difficult to identify this figurine as a specific deity because, as I already mentioned, this figure

(including the jointed figure from Nonoalco) does not have any distinguishing features besides the visible breasts and necklace.

Four perforations are visible at each shoulder and at the bottom of each corner. Interestingly enough, three limbs were also recovered from Chiconautla and placed with this jointed figurine, which shed some light on how the limbs would have been attached to the rest of the body. Lastly, another item to point out is that while the body is flat and thin like, the limbs are round. Wardle (1902, 214) working with similar jointed figurines from Teotihuacan mentioned that the looseness of the limbs on the body indicates movement and therefore, these figurines would have been active.

Type III Solid Figures

I classified eleven figurines in this category. From the 11 solid figurines, 4 were head only, 5 were fragmented, and 2 were complete forms. All the head only figurines are males with very distinct features. In total, solid figurines had 5 males, 6 female and none shaped like animals.

Subtype A Female

In this category, there were a total of five figurines that I could identify as being gendered female. The three female complete figurines all have a flat back and could have stood on their own feet if they were not broken. The massive feet that extend past the body would have enabled these figurines to stand on their own. The female bodies have

very different garments: one wearing a plain dress over the body (Figure A6) while the other wears the popular geometric pattern skirt seen in the rattles (Figure A7).

Subtype B Male

There were a total of five figurines in this category that I could classify as being male and only one of these figurines was in complete form. Some of the males were in a sitting position holding their legs close to their chest and arms across the knees (Figure A8). This position is also seen in other figurines, as well as in large Aztec sculptures. The male complete form figurine is dressed in an elaborate outfit from head to toe. The costume appears to be feathers, and the figurine wears the customary *maxtlatl* (loincloth) worn by most Aztec men (Anwalt 1981, 21-23). The figurine has a protruding face and visible tongue emerging from its mouth, which is a point I will discuss later.

Summary

The sample of Chiconautla revealed that rattles were the most popular figurines than any other type. Female gendered figurines are also more prominent than males because they are found in every type and in both clays. An oddity at Chiconautla was the absence of architectural structures shaped like pyramids and animal figurines.

Nonoalco: Mexica Barrio

The site of Nonoalco is rather problematic both historically and archaeologically due to the lack of available published information. Although others have excavated figurines from Nonoalco in addition to Vaillant's 1937 excavation (Cook 1950), there is still very limited information regarding this city. Many of the historical sources list Nonoalco as a site that was part of Tlatelolco that lead to Tlacopan, such as Caso (1956, Map 3), Calnek (1976, Map 20), Sanders et al. (1979, Map 18), and Elson and Smith (2001, Figure 2). The only extant historical reference comes from Seler (1990) who states that when the Toltecs spread through the Valley of Mexico, they traveled through Nonoalco. Given its placement on most maps, Nonoalco appears to be a barrio west of Tlatelolco, a city that was next to Tenochtitlan (Guilliem Arroyo 1997, 132).

All the ethnohistorical accounts and literature describe Tlatelolco as an important multicultural center next to Tenochtitlan. However, Tlatelolco's significance in the Aztec economy did not secure this city-state as part of the Triple Alliance. Some scholars believe Tlatelolco was undermined due to its alliance to the Tepanecas, which ultimately contributed to the continuous political and ethnic turmoil with Tenochtitlan (Guilliem Arroyo 1999, 39). In addition, Tlatelolco was established and flourished before the Mexica capital and had an increasing wealth derived from its large market (Guilliem Arroyo 1999, 33).[19] Lastly, family conflict derived from the intermarriage of a Mexica to

[19] Tlatelolco's market was overtaken by the Mexica's after a civil war between both cities in 1473 (Pasztory 1983, 310).

a Tepaneca from Tlatelolco caused this city-state to be under Mexica political control (Evans 2001, 256).

Nonoalco is an interesting site to examine because of its conflicting history with Tenochtitlan and its ruling group, the Mexica. Histories show that Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco were warring neighbors (Pasztory 1983, 107). Therefore, although they were next-door neighbors, Tlatelolco was not completely submissive to the Mexica ways, allowing its people to continue their culture.

Vaillant's notes reveal that his excavations in Nonoalco in 1935 produced the remains of a canal and midden near a residential area (Vaillant 1937). In the canal, Vaillant uncovered large frequencies of pottery leading him to suggest that this was an area of residences. The context of the trenches remains inconclusive, and what Vaillant labeled a "ceremonial deposit" remains unresolved.[20]

Nevertheless, Nonoalco serves as an important location because this area contained the largest amount of figurines when compared to Chiconautla and with a wide variety of specimens. Figurines from this site date to the Late Postclassic Period (A.D. 1350-1520). Other items found with these figurines include ceramic sherds, bowls, jars, comals, and long-handled censers.

Formal Characteristics of Nonoalco Figurines

Nonoalco yielded a larger number of figurines, a wider variety, and more complete forms than Chiconautla. It also contained a figurine sample that varied in size

[20] See footnote 2.

between 4 and 15 inches in height. Out of the 61 figurines that I initially began my study with, 12 were discarded because they were difficult to identify gender, characteristics, and/or were in poor condition to reveal any useful data. This brought my total to 47 figurines examined.

Type I Hollow Rattle Figures

At Nonoalco hollow rattle figurines were only gendered female. The male figurines, architectural structures and animals were not seen in the rattle type. Millian (1981, 36) mentions that rattles are only seen in red clay. The majority of rattles in this type are mostly seen in red clay, but I found one white clay rattle figurine in my sample. This type yielded 9 figurines: 5 were heads, 2 were body fragments (displaying the head and a very limited portion of the body), and 2 were complete figurines.

Subtype A Female

Hollow rattle female figures totaled nine with seven figurines wearing the two-horn tufts hairstyle. This subtype shared the same two-horned shaped headdress and the same geometric pattern skirt, belted around the waist with two balls hanging in the front, identified as copal bags by Kaplan (1958, 40). All were gendered female due to their headdresses, which are considered typical hairstyles of Aztec women (Guilliem Arroyo, 118-120). Only two figurines were functional rattles and actually contained the small ball inside the hollow body (Figure A9). When the rattles were shaken, a small faint noise was made. It was difficult to hear the noise, however, if there were many rattles being

shaken at the same time, as I did with the two complete figurines. I believed it would have produced a loud sound.

All of the figurines with the exception of one, shared the following characteristics: rimmed incised eyes, a large protruding nose, parted lips (with a few showing a tongue), three row necklace, geometric pattern skirt, and they all wore ear spools. Some showed visible signs of hair emerging from their headdresses, while others did not. I would like to point out here that a closer examination of the each of the faces revealed that they all had different shaped faces; some had very round faces (Figure A10) while others had elongated oval faces and some have high cheek bones (Figure A11) while others have flat faces. From the complete figurines, only one is kneeling and the others are standing. These had large feet enabling them to stand on their own. The standing figures have arms over their stomachs. One of the fragments is seen holding a child (Figure A12), gendered female, with a similar costume as the figurine holding it.

Type II Jointed Figures

Jointed figurines are limited in themes, postures, and iconography. There were no males, architectural structures, or animals in this type. I also did not find any characteristics that would identify jointed figurines as males. All the jointed figurines appear to be female and are rendered in red clay. The number of jointed figurines was also small in this site, as well as in Chiconautla, and one could conclude that this type was perhaps not as popular in these locations. Only one figurine belonged to this type (Figure A13). Although the specimen is a body fragment and only the abdomen and the

skirt are visible, it has distinguishable iconography. This jointed figurine was gendered female because of the visible exposed breasts and the geometric patterned skirt commonly seen in the hollow rattle female figurines. Also, prominent on this jointed figurine are the two holes at the bottom of the skirt that would have served to join the legs to the body, which were not attached.

Type III Solid Figures

This type had the greatest number of figurines, totaling 38. Within this group, 16 were gendered female, 10 male, 9 were architectural structures, and 3 were animals. It also had a variety of themes, postures, sizes, and shapes.

Subtype A Female

I examined sixteen female figurines from this category. Four figures were in complete form, 4 were almost complete, 2 were body fragments, and 6 were heads. This type was in the worst shape than the rest because most of the features were blurred and had very little detail. Many of the facial features are not visible. With the exception of three figurines, all the female sold figurines have flat backs, are rendered in cream clay, round eyes, wear plain garments with hardly any decoration, and those that still have a head, wear ear spools. Most of these figurines are in a kneeling position (totaling 6 figures) with their hands resting on their lap (Figure A14), with the exception of one figurine that has her arms out in front in a clapping motion posture. The face shapes are

in two categories: 1) oval and flat with a protruding nose or 2) oval with a protruding nose and jaw.

Those figurines that had visible headdresses or hairstyles were grouped in seven groups based on these characteristics: 1) Two projecting horns with hair braided (Figure A15) and left hanging chin length (2 figurines); 2) two horns that end in two round balls (1 figurine); 3) Hair that is braided, parted in the middle and that hangs at each side of the face (2 figurines); 4) two horn tufts on the top reminiscent of the hairstyle on the hollow rattles (1 figurine); 5) two fan-like headdress with plumes coming out of the top (2 figurines); 6) round headdress with two rows of balls divided by lines (2 figurines); 7) square haircut that outlines the face with a round twisted cloth looped around the head (1 figurine).

There are two small figurines that have extended stomachs that Kaplan (1958, 124) has identified as pregnant figurines. Neither of the figurines shows visible breasts, and both of their faces are rather eroded, which makes it difficult to distinguish facial features. Kaplan labeled this Type I Coatlicue even though both do not wear the typical standardized geometric skirt associated with that deity (1958, 15-19).

Subtype B Male

There were a total of 10 male figurines in this category: 7 body fragments, 1 head, and 2 nearly complete figurines. Eight figurines were in cream clay, one was in red clay and the other in dark gray clay. Four figurines are seated holding their legs to their chest with their arms, a customary posture seen among males throughout Aztec art and

sculpture. One of these sitting figures holds a drum between his legs. Three figures—one standing (Figure A16) and two sitting—wear a shell-like pendant that is associated with the deity Quetzalcoatl (Parsons 1972, 96). There are five male figurines standing with their hands on their hips (Figure A17). From these five, only two males are holding items in their hands, one holding a shield and the other holds a shaft-like object. This figure is also dressed in what appears to be a typical Aztec warrior costume. Those males that have a complete body, wear the loincloth that Aztec men of all social classes wore (Anawalt 1981, 23). All of these male figurines would have stood on their own if they were complete and not broken.

Subtype C Architectural Structures

Figurines in this subtype totaled nine, and all of them were fragments.[21] All were made in cream-colored clay, with the exception of one being in black clay and another in red clay. Pyramid-shaped figures were mold-made, having a solid top and being hollow and open at the bottom of the base. Out of the nine figures, five pieces had the rectangular bottom with leading steps to the top of the pyramid, and only four were remnants of the temples that would have been on the top of these structures. The pyramids that contained an anthropomorphic figure were broken and only the legs were visible. The number of steps differed on each of the fragments. Upon examining the complete architectural structures in Baer's catalogue (1996, 64-85), all the pyramid-

[21] Kaplan classified forty-six figurines belonging to this type that she labeled Type XII (1958, 158-163).

shaped figurines varied between five to fifteen steps. Thereby indicating no real significance in the number of steps on these figures.

Figures shaped in the form of pyramid structures dating to the Postclassic period are only seen at Nonoalco because this type found at Chiconautla dates to the Toltec-Mazapan period (Kaplan 1958, 35). Kaplan suggests that these pieces were popular in the Late Aztec period, a time that Millian (1981, 37) believes was after the architectural development of the Aztecs. Pyramid-temple figurines are both unique and confounding because, to my knowledge, they are not found in other Mesoamerican sites and no scholar has fully addressed this rare phenomenon. Baer (1996, 4) distinguished the pyramid figurines into two groups: 1) pyramids that contain one or two temple structures on top and 2) pyramids that have an anthropomorphic figure that is sitting or standing on top. Both of these groups were seen in my sample. Some scholars agree that these anthropomorphic figures sitting on the top are male deities (Kaplan 1958, 34; Parsons 1972, 105-108; Baer 1996, 14). In the five pieces that have sitting figurines on top, only the legs are left and there is no way of identifying any gender characteristics or whether they have any regalia associated to any deity.

The four pieces that were the temple structures on the top of the pyramid figurines were all different in style. All four had a temple with a door in the front. Three were one-temple structures with an elongated rooftop with one having a "waffle-like pattern" (Parsons 1972, 105). One figure stood out because it was a double temple structure with one temple having a waffle-like rooftop (Figure A18). These twin temple structures are reminiscent of the six temples of this architectural fashion that existed in the Valley of

Mexico at Santa Cecelia Acatitlan, Tenayuca, Teopanzolco, Texcoco, Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco (Baer 1996, 14).

Subtype D Animals

Three animals were in this subtype with all of them being only heads with no bodies. Not one of these animals was a complete figurine. One of the heads was rendered in red clay while the other two heads were in dark gray clay on the exterior but reddish clay on the interior. This dark gray clay was also seen among the male figurines from Nonoalco. I could identify two of the heads as possums because they share a striking similarity to the *tlacuacha* (possum) figurines from Guilliem Arroyo's sample (1997, 126-127). These figures have long snouts, circles for eyes, long ears (visible only one of the heads), and they also have open mouths (Figure A19). The other figurine head looks bird-like, although it is difficult to assign any one type of bird. It has a long beak-like mouth, incised eyes, and from a closer examination, looks as though this figurine may have been painted.

Summary

Removing the limitations imposed with organizing every figurine within a specific deity allows the observer to the see the diversity inherent within the figurines. My figurine sample for Nonoalco was rather small when compared to previous figurine studies, however, I would note that my 48 figurines varied and not one figurine looks exactly like the other. All the figurines that had a head had either an open mouth or parted

lips with a protruding tongue. At Nonoalco, cream-colored clay figurines were in greater frequencies than their red clay counterparts, which were more prominent in the rattle figurines.

Shared Characteristics from Chiconautla and Nonoalco

An interesting feature among all the female figurines is a protruding tongue, large projecting noses, ear spools, and parted lips. Aztec noble women wore ear spools as a sign of wealth, however, Berdan and Analwalt associate ear spools with the Cihuapipiltin (1997, 146).

Parted lips, a protruding tongue, and sometimes the display of teeth, are features repeatedly found among both male and female figurines. Many Aztec deities depicted in codices are often shown with a protruding tongue. While this feature has helped previous scholars link figurines to certain deities, I believe that it is a sign of speech. Throughout Mesoamerican art, an importance was given to the display of speech or song by rendering it visible through the use of a scroll coming out of their mouth as seen in codices, paintings, vases, and other items. Houston and Taube (2000, 264) explain, "For the Mesoamerican mind, the substance of sight, odour, and sound was neither empty nor ethereal; rather, it invested vitality and meaning in the spaces it traversed and occupied." I believe this is an important feature because one could argue that these figures are active ritual participants.

The speech scroll also depicted important individuals and/or it was an indicator that ritual speech was being said (Berdan and Anawalt 1997, 147). Although the speech

scroll is not depicted on the figurines, I would suggest that the open mouth and the protruding tongue are indicating this same idea. Houston and Taube also mention that different speech scrolls may indicate modulated tone or oscillated volume (2000, 280). One could argue that the presence of an open mouth when compared to a protruding tongue and the noticeable teeth, expresses a variation of speech being "spoken" by the figurine.

The size of the figurines allowed them to be portable items that could be placed, carried, or moved fairly easily (Millian 1981, 38). In addition, the importance is placed on the front of the figurine—a feature Millian (1981, 39) has already pointed out—with all the detail and decoration placed in front of the figurine whereas the back is less decorated, if at all. All these points reveal that the figurines were very tangible in nature and that they essentially "performed" within a ritual context, rattle figurines more so than any other type.

The fact that hollow rattle figures could produce noise could reveal their function as ritual instruments. Millian has already suggested that rattles played an active role in private ritual activities concerning fertility and agriculture (1981, 48). Nevertheless, I would add that the combination of the noise emitting from the rattle and the open mouth shows that the figurines were in fact active participants engaged in the ritual taking place. The noise that the rattle would have created when shaken could be that of an instrument but it could also have been created to mimic other sounds of nature. In this manner, the figurines' presence was also noted through the noise being made and also through the sound that one could suggest were literally coming out of the figurines mouth.

Furthermore, one could suggest that the figurine was orating, singing, or creating music for the participant(s).

The female figurines wear similar garments, the crisscross, geometric pattern skirt being the most prominent. This patterned skirt was seen on all the female types that were standing or kneeling. Anawalt describes women's *cueitl* (skirt), as a common garment worn by all Aztec females (1981, 33). These skirts were made of cotton, maguey, yucca, or palm-fiber cloth. The skirts served as symbols of social status as well as determined the age group of the individual wearing it. Anawalt also explains that Aztec women demonstrated their age, class, and wealth through the ornamentation and intricate patterns on their clothing, and in this case, through their skirts (1981, 33). In addition, the patterns and decorations on the skirt also identified the wearer in a ritual context (1981, 34). The particular geometric pattern visible on all the figurines in this category is said to be associated with the type of garments worn in ritual ceremonies (1981, 34). In the *Codex Borbonicus*, a woman is depicted showing a similar garment to the geometric patterned skirt, and Anawalt (1981, 35) claims that she is partaking in a harvest ritual.

Perforations were also not consistent: some were completely through the figurine, whereas others are only partial (meaning the hole is sometimes hinted or only partially started but does not go through). Parsons (1972, 82-83) also discussed this issue and suggested that because the holes do not completely pierce the figurine could mean they were not suspended as others have suggested. Instead, Parsons believes small decorations of obsidian or feathers could have been inserted in these holes (1972, 83). Additionally, if these figurines were hung by these perforations with string around children, trees, and/or

buildings, it would be possible to see wear and tear on the front and back of these figurines, something I did not find.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The fact that figurines are recovered from a multitude of locations and contexts suggest that their meaning and function was not fixed. The figurines from both Chiconautla and Nonoalco shared characteristics in hairstyles, ear spools, and facial features, and yet, not one of them was identical to the other. These differences point to regional and stylistic variations throughout the Valley of Mexico.

Klein and Victoria Lona have already suggested that Aztec figurines do not represent any of the deities depicted in the sculptural works by the Mexica state or the codices, and that perhaps the figurines represent deities from around the Valley of Mexico that were associated with the everyday needs of the people (2009, 367). Smith (2002, 112) also echoes this notion but adds that figurines probably represented "generalized spirits" that were summoned for specific purposes. Agreeing with Smith (2002), it seems likely that figurines were sacred essences that did not represent one specific deity.

I also agree with Klein and Victoria Lona (2009, 355) that the generalized function of the figurines was to protect, abate, and cure health related concerns and for women, assist with fertility (getting pregnant, labor pain, infertility, etc). However I dissent with their notions that the figurines materialized "the needs and desires of individuals and small groups living the simple life of a peasant or commoner, most often outside the city limits of the Aztec capital" (355). At Chiconautla, the palace inhabited by the tlatoani and other nobles also contained figurines. The figurines recovered from

Chiconautla prove that outside of Tenochtitlan and within a public sphere practiced by elites, communities were also concerned with curing, disease, and fecundity.

The emphasis on the decorated garments, intricate hairstyles, and more importantly, on differentiating gender demonstrate that the female and male figurines also served to distinguish gender roles. Among other Mesoamerican communities, groups used figurines to discuss gender and social and cultural values as seen from the sample at Xaltocan. Brumfiel and Overholtzer (2009, 299) argued that the figurines from Xaltocan served to address gender, lineage, and class, among other social factors surrounding identity. Cyphers working with Middle Pre-Classic figurines from Chalcatzingo, suggested that female gendered figurines represented the "fertile stages of the female life cycle" that included "puberty, stages of pregnancy, and childrearing" (1993: 213). Although I did not find figurines depicting all these phases in either site, the occurrence of figurines holding small children do emphasize childrearing. The Aztecs were very concerned with child rearing as observed in the Codex Mendoza, which depicts images of mothers training their daughters to spin and weave, and fathers teaching their sons to fish (Ross 1984, 74). The female figurines embody the image of a typical noble woman: the variety of hairstyles, the garments they wear, and how they emphasize child bearing by rending figurines that carry children in their arms. For males, the figurines wear the typical short haircut at chin level, a loincloth wrapped around their waist, and some are dressed like Aztec warriors. Furthermore, the male and female figurines would have served to express the qualities valued for each gender.

The architectural structures shaped like pyramid-temples may point to a state sponsored ritual. These are perhaps replicas of the main prominent temples at known city-states. One could suggest that these structures served as reminders of the rituals that would have occurred at each local city-state. While these temples all vary, with the exception of the twin-temple temples, this could lead us to believe that they were not one specific place but an idea of sacred locations. Patricia Plunket (2002, 6) suggests that Postclassic figurines may have been votaries or sacred objects associated with pilgrimage activity. In this case, the architectural structures could be mementos or icons for sacred locations such as Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, Tlatelolco, or other city-centers infused with ritual activity.

Figurines were part of rituals that varied according to a multiplicity of factors. As Whitehouse writes, ""we must recognize that [ritual] objects will not necessarily remain fixed in the same place, but may move according to time, user, and context" (1996, 11). Rituals associated with figurines were not only confined to the privacy of the household. Nonoalco's canal yielded a huge number of figurines that can lead one to believe that domestic ritual also occurred outside of the household. At Chiconautla, the exact location of where the figurines were likely used is not fully known because the figurines were found in a midden inside a buried house. Nevertheless, the fact that figurines were recovered from a residential complex—a palace—also demonstrates that domestic ritual also involved elite participants. Many agents also seem to have been involved. The presence of male figurines, architectural structures, and animal representations at both

locations suggest other rituals were conducted that were not associated with and only for female agents.

My research revealed that the study of ritual and figurines within Aztec studies is replete with complexity and contradictions. Elites at Chiconautla did participate in ritual activities involving more female gendered figurines that may have centered on female needs. However, this does not mean that men and children were not part of these daily practices. Men too would have been concerned with fertility and health related concerns. The site of Nonoalco showed that the people there might have participated in some ritual related to the local government with the presence of pyramid-temple figurines. Yet, the presence of numerous figures gendered female and male, and animal figurines could also point to a variation of ritual occurring within this community. Furthermore, figurines and domestic ritual reveal that while their exact function and meaning is not fixed, they were encompassing of many participants, spaces, and their daily needs.

Appendix A - Figures

ABBREVIATIONS: AMNH, American Museum of Natural History

Figure 1: Chiconautla Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.265/6489 (top), Cat. 30.265/6854 (bottom)

Figure 2: Chiconautla Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.24/5283 (left side), 30.24/5285 (right side)

Figure 3: Chiconautla Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.1 9994/5020

Figure 4: Chiconautla Type I Subtype B
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.1 9953/4161

Figure 5: Chiconautla Type II
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.1 9958/4141

Figure 6: Chiconautla Type III Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 169/5688

Figure 7: Chiconautla Type III Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.1 9954/5482

Figure 8: Chiconautla Type III Subtype B
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 381/5072

Figure 9: Nonoalco Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1411/8541

Figure 10: Nonoalco Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1371/9413

Figure 11: Nonoalco Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1377/9165

Figure 12: Nonoalco Type I Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1398/9616

Figure 13: Nonoalco Type II
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1492/8249

Figure 14: Nonoalco Type III Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1517/9286

Figure 15: Nonoalco Type III Subtype A
Photograph by Author
AMNH 30.2 1573/9535

Figure 16: Nonoalco Type III Subtype B
Photograph by Author
Cat. 30.2 1737/9114 (head), 30.2 1737/8426 (body)

Figure 17: Nonoalco Type III Subtype B
Photograph by Author
AMNH Cat. 30.2 1706/8754

Figure 18: Nonoalco Type III Subtype C
Photograph by Author
Cat. 30.2 1797/9545

Figure 19: Nonoalco Type III Subtype D
Photograph by Author
Cat. 30.2 1856/9542

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